

25 March 2009

Mr J Barry  
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Dear Mr Barry

### Ofsted survey inspection programme – Design and Technology

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 23-24 March 2009 to look at work in Design and Technology (D&T).

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of departmental documentation, analysis of students' work and the observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of D&T was judged to be good.

### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards overall are good.

- Students enter the school with below average attainment in D&T and make good progress to reach above average standards. For example, in 2008, more students achieved qualifications than is the case nationally.
- Boys' and girls' achievement is similar; however very few girls opt for resistant materials and few boys opt for food technology. The school is very aware of this and has already begun to tackle this.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because the school 'goes the extra mile' to assist them. Support from teachers and teaching assistants is clearly thought through and ensures that they cope with and understand challenging tasks. Staff know the students' needs very well and this ensures they are able to fully participate in practical work.

## Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning overall is good.

- Lessons proceed at a good pace and appropriate emphasis is placed on students' practical work. Teachers ensure that underpinning theory work is clearly explained through practical activity. In doing so teachers make good use of computers and computer aided design and computer aided manufacture to model ideas and to explain how to carry out tasks.
- The atmosphere in lessons is calm. Students enjoy making. Lessons are interesting and students are justly proud of the range of things they make. They appreciate being able to choose what they want to make. Students work well and with a high degree of cooperation. This ensures that large groups make effective use of space and equipment.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use this effectively when questioning to develop students' thinking and to probe their understanding. Teachers' marking of students' work also reflects their thorough understanding of awarding body specifications.
- Peer assessment is a strong feature. Students respect and value each others views of their work. They say it helps them to improve their designs. National Curriculum levels are used accurately to indicate the standard of some work. However, opportunities are missed to feedback this information to students.

## Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The D&T curriculum makes good links with other subjects. D&T courses support students' awareness of sustainability very well. For example recycling of paper, plastics and card is part of classroom practice along with composting in food technology. Students take good advantage of opportunities to improve their school community: the raised beds and seating around the school that students have made has a professional finish.
- Progression across the material areas is weak. This is because the school has not taken sufficient account of what students are expected to do to reach the higher National Curriculum levels. Developments are well in hand to meet the new Key Stage 3 programmes of study.
- The school has introduced vocational subjects but the choice is limited. This needs to be extended to enable wider participation and better meet the needs of middle and lower attaining students, particularly girls.

## Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are outstanding.

- You provide good support and challenge to the D&T department. This is demonstrated in the provision of a rich learning environment and in promoting the subject's development of assessment for learning.
- In the two years since the new head of department was appointed he has turned the department into a strong team of very committed and hard working staff. He is an enthusiastic and successful ambassador for the subject. He is well organised and understands how all specialisms contribute to a full understanding of the subject. His lively approach to teaching models the best practice. This enables him to take an effective lead in developments.

The extent to which inequality and stereotyping are tackled in D&T

- The school is vigilant and no inequality or stereotyping was noted during this visit.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving progression through the material areas by ensuring that National Curriculum levels are used in all planning and assessment
- improving the curriculum through developing more vocational opportunities that will better meet the needs of middle and lower attaining girls.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop D&T in the school.

As explained in the previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker  
Her Majesty's Inspector